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ABSTRACT

Educational reformers have been concerned about an apparent lack of depth in most social studies curricula with the traditional pressure to "cover" vast amounts of content leading to limited student retention of knowledge. Observational studies have analyzed numerous high school social studies classrooms in which teacher-led lecture/recitation and mundane rote tasks are the norm. Such teacher-dominated classrooms limit student opportunity to learn critical thinking skills since students are rarely asked to construct substantive knowledge. This paper discusses the findings of a study in which the instructional practices of 12 U. S. history teachers in 6 schools and 24 classes were examined. Information concerning teaching methods, goals, tasks required, and classroom management strategies were examined to assess student opportunity to learn from the instruction. The findings indicated increasing student opportunity to learn, especially the opportunity to learn critical thinking skills, may well involve changing some teaching environments, and insuring that all teachers have the requisite content and pedagogic knowledge and skills to choose and implement the goals and activities that will come closer to the ideal social studies classroom envisioned by reformers. Numerous charts and tables are included. (DB)

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Constraint of Teaching Methods and Opportunity to Learn in High School History Classes:

The Pressures of Content Coverage and Classroom Management

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Paper presented at Session 18.20 of the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April, 1990, Boston

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Objective

Multiple research and reform reports have lamented the mediocre state of social studies instruction, and raised questions concerning both content and methods (Armento,1986; Bradley Commission,1988; Downey & Levstik,1988; National Commission on the Social Studies,1989). A common content concern is the apparent lack of depth in most curricula (Newmann,1988), which tends to support a factual content coverage orientation; unfortunately, 75% of the facts learned in this manner are forgotten within a year (Ornstein,1988). This content/curriculum philosophy is buttressed by an array of uninspiring teaching methods, especially at the high school level. Observational studies have analyzed numerous high school social studies classrooms in which teacher-led lecture/recitation and mundane rote tasks are the norm (McKee,1988; McNeil,1986; Stake,et al.,1978; Thornton,1988). Such teacher-dominated classrooms limit student opportunity to learn critical thinking skills since students are rarely asked to construct substantive knowledge (Downey & Levstik,1988; Newmann,1989). Thus, while social studies reformers call for an ideal social studies classroom in which the curriculum and teaching methods would develop an array of critical thinking skills (Newmann,1990), the reality is that a minority of students experience such high quality instruction.

While our knowledge of what actually occurs in social studies classrooms has expanded in recent years, additional observational studies are needed in order to tease out the complex relationships between teaching and student learning (Downey & Levstik,1988; Fraenkel,1987). The research to be discussed seeks to add to our understanding of high school social studies instruction by examining the practice of 12 United States History teachers in 6 schools and 24 classes. An initial goal of this study is to describe how teachers use class time, focussing on key teaching methods. Information concerning teaching methods, goals, tasks required, and classroom management strategies can then be used to assess student opportunity to learn from the instruction. Finally, the study seeks to understand why teachers choose various instructional strategies and appear to offer differential opportunity for student learning.

Literature Review

The concept, opportunity to learn, lies at the heart of the research to be described. Opportunity to learn refers to the content, methods, tasks, and teacher-student interactions involved in any learning situation, and serves as one way of judging the quality of instruction (Harnischfeger & Wiley,1985). Opportunity to learn high school social studies is frequently limited by both the teacher's choice of goals/content and teaching methods. The social studies research literature has long

documented teacher preference for the goal of citizenship education (Stanley,1985), which is frequently referred to more graphically as knowledge transmission (Armento,1986; Eslinger & Superka,1982). Certainly, the common teacher-dominated methods of lecture, recitation, and factually oriented worksheets, as well as heavy use of audio-visual materials (Cornbleth,1985a; Fancett & Hawke,1982; McNeil,1986; Shaver,et al.,1979; Weiss,1978) lend support to the knowledge transmission goal. Alternately, few teachers use methods such as critical discussion, role playing, debates, research projects, analysis of primary source documents, or simulation games (Ravitch & Finn,1987; Stake,et al.,1978; Weiss,1978) which can offer great opportunity for in-depth learning.

Although social studies teachers often note the importance of high level skills (Cornbleth,1985a; Weiss,1978; Wiley & Race,1977), multiple researchers have documented the disjuncture between teacher beliefs and the reality of classroom practice (McKee,1988; McNeil,1986). For example, over 95% of secondary social studies teachers in a national survey selected critical thinking from a list as a key goal; however, in an interview situation (NSF study), social studies teachers rarely volunteered such high level skills as a goal (cited in Eslinger & Superka,1982). Teacher reports of methods as well as goals utilized do not always seem congruent with classroom practice. A case in point would be the the high portion, 62%, of high school social studies teachers completing the NSF survey who stated that they use discussion daily (Weiss,1978). Perhaps these teachers do engage students in oral instruction daily; however, we need more detailed information on the type (recitation is quite different from discussion) of oral interaction utilized so that the opportunity to learn from these different teaching methods can be more meaningfully assessed. In addition, we need to know more about the contexts in which certain teaching methods and goals are employed. Teaching methods clearly differ across schools and ability groups (Curtis & Shaver,1980; Murphy & Hallinger,1989; Newmann,1988). Unfortunately, many of the methods (essays, discussion, inquiry activities) that researchers and reformers feel will help students develop "critical habits of the mind" (Bradley Commission,1988; Prawat,1989a) are often limited in their use to honors classes (Fancett & Hawke,1982; Ponder,1979; Stake,et al.,1978; Wiley & Race,1977).

Why have so many social studies teachers been observed to limit student opportunity to learn by truncating their goals and teaching methods? Several pressures or influences on teachers can be explored as explanatory hypotheses including the teaching environment, teacher choice of goals and the persistent pressure of content coverage, the quality of teacher content knowledge, and the level of teacher pedagogic knowledge/skills, especially those skills related to classroom management. First, the teaching environment often exerts straightforward

constraints on teaching. Most immediate are personal time constraints such as the typical load of 2-3 preparations and five classes of 25-26 students (Farmer,1984; Rutter,1986) which limit the time available for planning and grading highly challenging tasks (Morrissett,1981; Shaver,et al.,1978). The fact that social studies teachers are 2-3 times more likely to coach than teachers of other subjects (Rutter,1986) also raises the concern that teachers may not have the time or energy necessary to put in the hours outside of classtime which are necessary for researching, planning, and grading challenging tasks. In addition, some teachers face a variety of contextual constraints such as lack of texts and materials, poor school administrative and guidance services, ineffectual departmental leadership, and limited professional development opportunities (Little,1989). Of course, the various characteristics of the students and the community that teachers consider when planning instruction form another influential aspect of the school environment.

The teacher's perception of the students and community directly influence the goals he selects[*], and should be considered when trying to explain teacher practice. Pressures for social studies teachers to focus on content coverage are great. The knowledge base of the discipline continually grows (Newmann,1988), multiple states and communities have instituted subject matter competency tests, and many teachers perceive that the community desires conservative social studies teaching that is satisfied by the content transmission approach (Fancett & Hawke,1982; Jarolimek,1981). An even more potent constraint on teaching is the perception of many teachers that certain students lack interest in social studies (Eslinger & Superka,1982). Some teachers use supposed lack of student interest or ability as a rationale for continually postponing more complex inquiry activities in order to cover the basics (McKee,1988; Stake,et al.,1978). This can lead to a vicious cycle in which some social studies teachers, feeling that students will not read the text, summarize the text in a lecture/recitation format, allowing students to earn a passing grade without a great deal of effort (Memory & McGowan,1985; McNeil,1986). This may especially be a problem in basic classes where teachers have been observed to accommodate students by lowering academic demands. In one high school study, at-risk students did remain engaged in instruction, but at the cost of lowering goals and standards to the extent that the worth of the instruction could be questioned (Miller,et al.,1988). Studies of academic work in various subject areas and ability groups have revealed that even when teachers attempt more challenging tasks, they tend to negotiate the tasks with students, ensuring student cooperation by lowering the standards for completion (Doyle,1983;

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[*] Male pronouns will be used in this paper since the research to be reported concerns a group of male secondary teachers; however, general reference to female teachers is also assumed.

Doyle & Sanford,1985). Although the area of social studies goals is quite complex, content coverage pressures may well be the central concern driving teacher decisions. A recent study of 10 high school social studies teachers found that those teachers who were more successful in promoting student thinking cited critical thinking as their most important goal, while the other teachers emphasized exposing students to subject matter (Onosko,1989). The teachers who promoted critical thinking on the part of students were observed to carefully limit content coverage, and worked within departments characterized by strong departmental leadership, feelings of collegiality and ownership among the staff, and formal programs to develop critical thinking (McCarthy & Scrag,1988).

Recent research on teacher content knowledge has potential to provide insights concerning the choice of teaching goals and methods. Multiple studies in history (Bodenhausen,1988; Wilson & Wineburg,1988) and other disciplines (Carlsen,1989; Hashweh,1987; Leinhardt & Smith,1985) have demonstrated how deficient teacher content knowledge constrains teaching and student opportunity to learn. Specifically, teachers with limited knowledge tend to overgeneralize and often fail to realize they lack knowledge that is central to successfully implementing a lesson or unit (Wilson & Wineburg,1988). The content knowledge of more expert teachers has depth, is highly organized (Cornbleth,1985a), and appears essential to the successful selection and integration of the content and tasks they present to students. Thorough content knowledge is imperative for conducting more open inquiry activities (Common,1982; Cornbleth,1985a), such that many teachers will not attempt such challenging activities for fear that they will appear ignorant and lessen their authority (Shaver,1981; Stake,et al.,1978). Limitations in content knowledge may well explain why so many social studies teachers stay close to the text, allow it to provide the conceptual structure for the course (Stake,et al.,1978), and use the text to maintain control and content authority (Common,1982; McNeil,1986). The problem of insuring essential content knowledge may be especially acute in social studies since schools often expect teachers to mount courses in several different history and social science fields. Evidence that a large number of secondary social studies teachers have completed a general social studies major (over 40% of teachers in a national survey, Farmer,1984), and therefore do not possess an in-depth major in one discipline, raises the concern that many teachers have not mastered the disciplines they must teach.

A number of recent studies have also demonstrated the pivotal roles of pedagogic (Brophy,1982; Carter & Doyle,1987) and social studies pedagogic knowledge (Carlsen & Wilson,1988; Gundmundsdottir,in press; Wineburg & Wilson,1988) in student learning. The importance of pedagogic knowledge has been demonstrated in an array of studies examining expert-novice differences. In all cases, the cognitive schemata

that expert teachers bring to their work have been shown to be better developed, organized, and integrated (Berliner,1987; Carter,et al.,1988; Livingston & Borko,1989). Pedagogic knowledge and skills include the teacher's repertoire of instructional methods and the concomitant classroom management skills necessary to implement the methods and maintain student engagement. For example, it seems that many teachers rely on the frontal, whole-group lecture/recitation approach because it facilitates the maintenance on-task behavior (Goodlad,1984). In addition, this teaching method allows the teacher to retain authority over the content covered in class, as well as the ideas/knowledge that are considered correct. Thus, some teaching methods appear to ease (recitation) or increase (complex inquiry activities) demands on both the teacher's content and pedagogic knowledge (McKee,1988; Shaver,1987). Unfortunately, some of the methods that ease the classroom management burden may constrain student learning of critical thinking skills (Cornbleth,1985b).

Ultimately, many of these constraints act together to either promote or curtail student opportunity to learn. In terms of content goals, many teachers sacrifice depth in their teaching in order to meet the goal of knowledge transmission. In order to successfully transmit this information, teachers often select teacher-centered methods, routine tasks, and set fairly minimal standards to insure that they gain the cooperation of students and maintain control of both class activities and knowledge (Doyle,1979; Fancett & Hawke,1982; McNeil,1986). Teachers who lack content and pedagogic knowledge, and teach within environments unsupportive of broader critical thinking goals, may be especially prone to use such methods that truncate student opportunity to learn. Of course, given that these influential factors are interrelated, extremely knowledgeable teachers and positive teaching environments are not equally distributed across schools and classes; thus, opportunity to learn may be more constrained in certain schools and ability groups.

Theoretical Framework

The study to be discussed seeks to analyze opportunity to learn through analysis of classroom observation and teacher interview data. In order to learn, students must be engaged* in high quality instruction (Harnischfeger & Wiley,1985). Thus, this suggests three ways in which opportunity can be examined. First, engagement can be assessed simply by the amount of time the teacher devotes to instructional versus non-instructional tasks. Second, we can attempt to assess engagement in terms of student

*Issues of student engagement in instruction and homework tasks are discussed in-depth in a separate paper entitled, "Academic Work in High School History Classes: Opportunity to Learn in Six Schools", presented during session 53.37 of the 1990 AERA Meeting.

on-task behavior and active participation in the lesson. Third, we must analyze the type and quality of instruction in which students are engaged, both in-class as well as for homework. The analyses presented in this paper will utilize a data base of 228 lessons to examine the opportunity to learn that is presented to students in 24 United States History classrooms. Case studies of three teachers will then be investigated in order to assess how successfully they engage students in instruction, the quality of instruction provided, and the influence of the teaching environment, as well as teacher goals, content knowledge, and pedagogic knowledge/skills, on teaching.

By focussing on the type and quality of instruction presented, and by considering several principles of cognitive psychology, it is possible to highlight the link between teacher knowledge, teacher practice, and student opportunity to learn. Social studies researchers have pointed out that recitation type questions which require discrete "right answers" are inimical to critical thinking and do not form working knowledge (Common,1985; Cornbleth,1985a). The growing body of theory and research on cognition and schema theory help to explain how discrete pieces of factual information can fail to become productive knowledge if that knowledge is not elaborated on and incorporated into the existing informational network or schema (see Prawat,1989a for a review). In order to foster such connections which result in active learning and tuning/restructuring of schema it is suggested that teachers make explicit relationships between pieces of information, engage students in substantive discourse in which they reason together, have students write, and conditionalize knowledge by helping students to understand when to use knowledge and skills (Prawat,1989a & b). Promoting such active learning requires a different teacher role in which teachers pass on their knowledge to students (Marshall,1988) and involve students directly in the construction of knowledge (Newmann,1989). In a circular fashion, it seems that if teachers wish to develop students with strong thinking skills and an organized body of knowledge, the teacher will have to possess deep and well-organized content and pedagogic knowledge.

Study Design

In order to provide a comprehensive picture of social studies instruction received by all students, high school United States History classes were chosen for study since all students are required to take this course. To provide a range of teaching environments (see Table 1 for selected school characteristics) for the study, two teachers were chosen at each of six schools which vary according to student SES and racial characteristics, suburban-small town location, departmental organization and staff development, as well as school administrative and financial situation.

Insert Table 1 about here

An attempt was made to insure valid comparisons across teachers (see Table 2 for selected teacher characteristics) by requiring that all be experienced (at least three years) and that they possess the equivalent of a master's degree; nonetheless, the teachers still vary a great deal concerning their content and pedagogic knowledge, as well as years of experience (4-26 years) and teaching load.

Insert Table 2 about here

Due to the limitations placed on sampling by the characteristics mentioned above, all of the teachers involved in the study are male.

A vast array of study data is available for examining the type and quality of instruction presented as well as the various influences on teacher practice. Teacher practice was observed during nine to ten days of instruction in two of each teacher's classrooms, resulting in a data base of 228 lessons. All six schools studied utilize ability grouping, so whenever possible the teachers were observed in two different ability groups. This design resulted in 5 honors, 6 basic, and 13 regular United States History classes for examination. Students typically enrolled in this course junior year; however, there were a few sophomores in classes at Grant High School, and a few repeating seniors in many of the regular and basic classes. Observations were typically conducted during two non-adjacent weeks (January - May, 1989) in an attempt to capture breadth of teaching methods, while still understanding the unit context of the lessons. Intensive field notes were later coded via one minute time segments to discern how time was used instructionally over various formats such as lecture, lecture/recitation, lecture/response, lecture/discussion, seatwork, and audio-visual use. (See Table 3 for the definition of variables.)

Insert Table 3 about here

Support of instruction through task information, task elaboration, and feedback was also coded. Finally, non-instructional time was divided into key categories such as organizational chores, behavior management, and free time. Focal student behaviors (such as oral involvement and off-task behavior) denoting degree of engagement were

continually noted during observations. In addition, information concerning the content and variety of academic tasks was gathered from observations and interviews. Data on the teaching environment was collected through department chair and teacher interviews; teacher background information was gathered during several hours of interviews with each teacher.

Instructional Methods Utilized in High School United States History

Each minute of class time observed was coded into one of eight instructional, three instructional support, or seven non-instructional format categories (See Table 3 for listing and definition of these formats.) In order to understand the basic character of instruction in this sample of 24 United States History classes, analyses will focus on the eight basic instructional formats, including the continuum of oral instructional methods (lecture to discussion), seatwork, audio-visual (AV) and testing formats, as well as special methods which are hybrids of oral and seatwork categories such as simulation games. Most instructional methods can best be analyzed by examining a scatterplot detailing the percent of time spent in particular formats over the 228 class sessions. Besides frequency information, it is possible to discern from the plots whether there are trends concerning the use of teaching methods by school (classified as serving a high or low proportion of college-bound students), ability group, or teacher characteristics. The advantages and problems inherent in instructional methods will be noted in an attempt to further our understanding of why particular teachers rely on certain methods.

The first five instructional formats categorize oral instruction on a continuum from lecture to discussion. While all teachers at some point use lecture and lecture/recitation, the oral instructional categories which are prompted by more open-ended teacher questions and are characterized by more lengthy student responses (lecture/response, lecture/discussion, and discussion) are not used by all teachers. Although all teachers utilize multiple oral formats, it is possible to characterize the 12 teachers by a primary teaching method. (See Table 4 for a list of teachers, primary teaching method, schools, and class ability group level.)

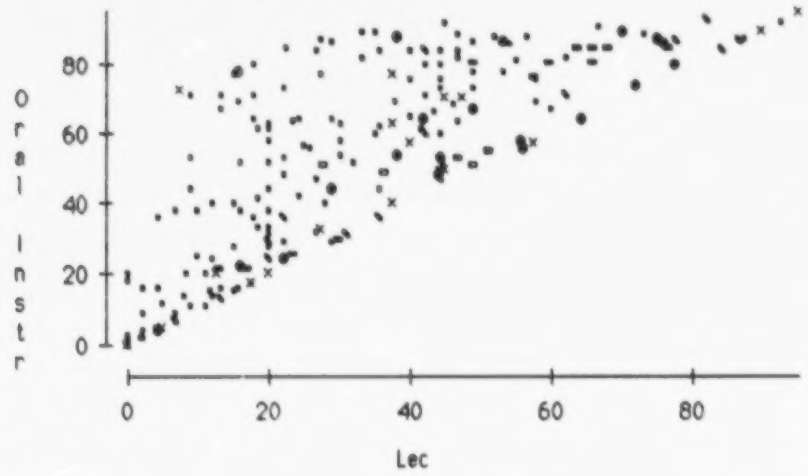
Insert Table 4 about here

By discussing particular teachers who heavily use and exemplify a particular method it is hoped that the category system takes on more meaning.

One of the leading stereotypes about high school social studies instruction is that most teachers can be typified as lecturers. In this study, lecture is coded during

any one minute segment in which the teacher makes an oral presentation containing subject matter content and does not expect students to answer questions. As can be noted from the scatterplot, Figure 1, virtually all of the 228 lessons included some time in the lecture format. Nonetheless, only those data points in the upper right hand corner of the plot represent typical "lecture lessons" in which a large portion of total time was spent in oral instruction, with most of that time being spent in lecture. The vast majority of these lessons were presented by four teachers who could be characterized as lecturers (Jones, Gage, Thomas, Armstrong); the lessons of these teachers are shown by plot symbols.

Fig. 1- The Percent of Time Spent in Lecture by the Total Percent of Oral Instructional Time

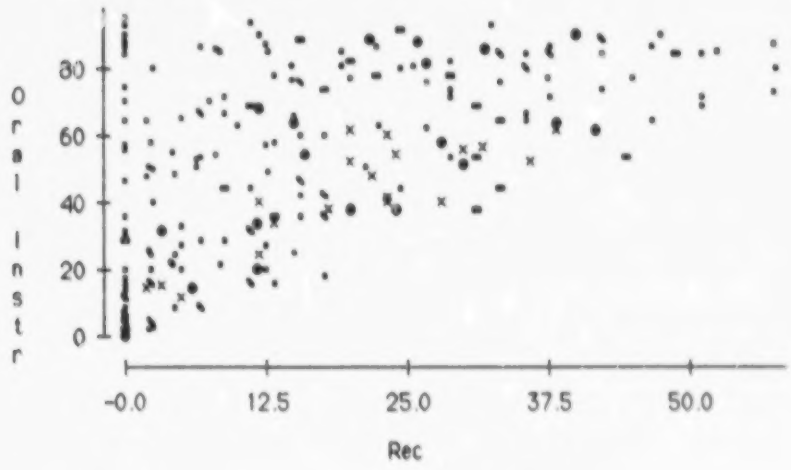


Mr. Jones= ●
Mr. Gage= =
Mr. Thomas= \
Mr. Armstrong= x

Certainly heavy use of the lecture format has the advantage of allowing these teachers to cover a great deal of content; however, classroom management (student engagement) problems could result or student learning may be limited due to lack of opportunity to actively create and organize knowledge. As far as student engagement is concerned, two of the four teachers (Gage and Thomas) experienced fairly high rates of off-task student behavior in both of their classes (often 20-40% of students were off-task three or more times during the class period), while Mr. Armstrong's basic class also exhibited high rates of off-task behavior. Two of the teachers (Jones and Armstrong) complimented their lecture style with methods and tasks (writing, research projects, some response:discussion) that would seem to foster more active student learning.

The second most frequently used instructional category, lecture-recitation, is used by teachers in 170 of the 228 lessons. Recitation is an oral teacher presentation that is characterized by multiple convergent questions which students can typically answer in one word or a brief phrase. As with lecture, recitation is a basic instructional format which is used frequently by almost all teachers; however, four of the teachers (Hurley, Hyde, Clark, Curtis) can be characterized by heavy use of the recitation format, fairly regular use of lecture, and very sporadic use of the more substantive response:discussion formats. The emphasis of these teachers on recitation can be seen when their lessons are shown as symbols in the Figure 2.

Fig. 2- The Percent of Time Spent in Recitation by the Total Percent of Oral Instructional Time



Mr. Curtis= x
Mr. Hurley= □
Mr. Clark= ●
Mr. Hyde= \

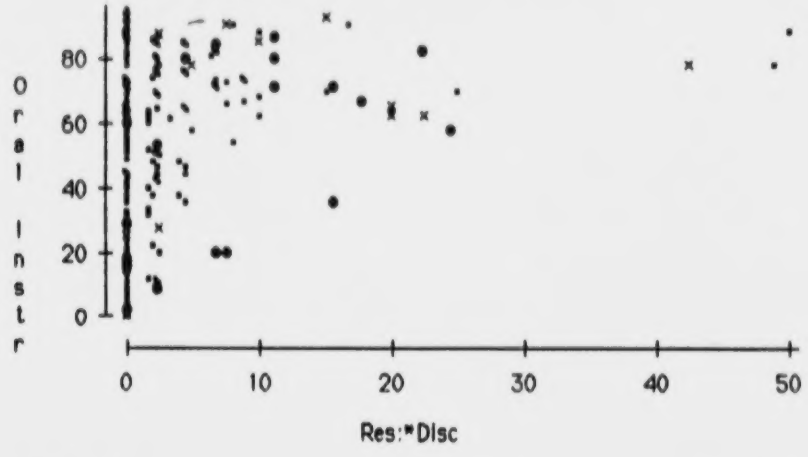
Three of the teachers (Hurley, Hyde, Curtis) tended to use recitation, lecture, seatwork, and occasional AV in order to keep students on-task; however, these classes lacked meaningful discussion and rigorous academic tasks which would theoretically prompt more substantive learning. Such settings in which content is minimally covered with students being kept busy and on-task have been termed "high production" classes; students in such classes are rarely exposed to more novel/challenging activities that are likely to develop critical thinking skills (Doyle & Sanford,1985). The fourth teacher in this group, Mr. Clark, utilized recitation and more substantive response:discussion formats that have potential to meet both content coverage and more in-depth learning goals; however, lack of instructional clarity and classroom management skills resulted in relatively high rates of off-task behavior that would seem to interfere with student learning. It is also interesting to note that the teachers who are characterized by

recitation work within two of the schools (Hoover and Carter) in which a relatively small minority of students seek to attend college.

The remaining three oral instructional categories seek to make finer distinctions between discussion-like instructional segments. Most importantly, what would commonly be termed discussion (open teacher questions followed by extensive student comments in which students carry the bulk of the discourse) was only observed once in 228 lessons. Instead, a few teachers heavily utilized two other discussion-like categories, lecture/response (convergent or divergent teacher questions which students answer with a phrase or sentence) or lecture/discussion (open questions which students answer with fairly lengthy sentences and some student to student interaction). As opposed to pure discussion, lecture/response and lecture/discussion involve a good deal of teacher direction, probing, and citing of parallels that may characterize teachers and students reasoning together (Prawat,1989b). Since even these latter two categories are relatively infrequent, the three categories of lecture/recitation, lecture/discussion, and discussion will be joined for this analysis.

Although response:discussion occurs in 93 of the 228 lessons, and in 22 of the classrooms, most of these instances are extremely brief and sporadic, usually constituting less than 15% of oral instructional time. As can be seen in Figure 3, most of the few classes in which more than 10% of time was spent in response:discussion were conducted by two teachers, Mr. Jewel and Mr. Anderson.

Fig. 3- The Percent of Time Spent in Response:*Discussion by the Total Percent of Oral Instructional Time



Mr. Jewel=● Mr. Anderson=x Mr. Taney=\

A third teacher, Mr. Taney, could be nominally characterized by the more substantive discussion categories because he continually balanced recitation, lecture, and AV with

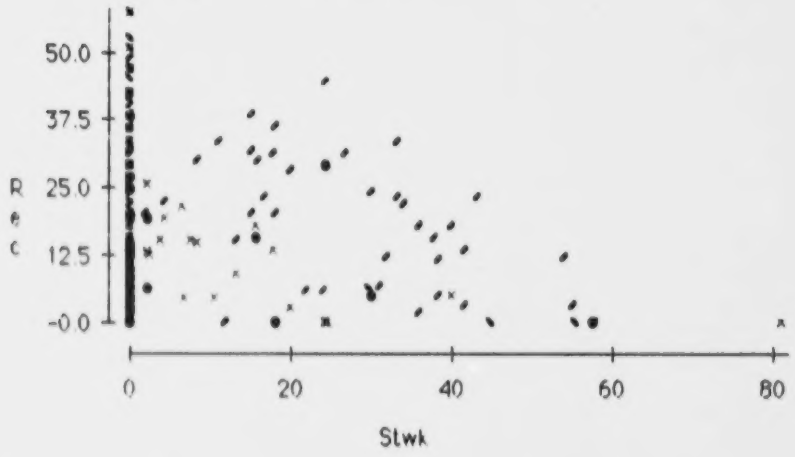
consistent, but relatively brief, amounts of response:discussion. If implemented well, one would predict that use of these discussion-like categories would increase student interest and promote habits of critical thinking. Alternately, use of these formats may constrain content coverage and make classes more difficult to manage since the course of events becomes less predictable. For example, Mr. Anderson lost small amounts of time to behavior management when he had to stop discussion to reprimand students for not attending or failing to follow the rules of polite discourse. While recitation characterized teachers in two of the schools serving a less college-bound population, the teachers characterized by response:discussion work within communities in which the vast majority of students are destined for college. It is also interesting to note that while four of the six teachers of basic classes incorporated some response:discussion, only one teacher, Mr. Jewel, was able to consistently maintain the engagement of basic students in fairly lengthy and rigorous oral instruction.

The picture of oral instruction derived from analysis of 228 lessons is relatively varied, yet skewed toward the traditional teacher-dominated formats of lecture and recitation. Four teachers spend most of their oral time in lecture, while the teaching of another four can be characterized by recitation. Only three teachers used the response:discussion categories to the extent that rigorous discussion-like activity outweighed or at least balanced other types of oral instruction. One remaining teacher, Mr. Gregory, who on average spent less than 8% of total time on oral instruction, cannot be characterized within this framework. This teacher was clearly an outlier due to his lack of active teaching and tolerance of off-task behavior during instructional segments. Mr. Gregory and one of the lecturers whose students exhibited extremely high rates of off-task behavior, Mr. Gage, worked in the school (Grant) with the least conducive teaching environment (limited funds, weak administrative leadership, a high degree of educative difficulty among students, etc.), which partially explains their teaching methods.

After the oral instructional formats, seatwork is the most frequently used teaching method, utilized in 66 or 28.9% of the lessons. Students typically complete seatwork tasks (reading, writing, completing worksheets) individually at their desks; occasionally students work in groups on seatwork tasks. Utilization of seatwork differs in frequency and type over schools and ability groups. As can be seen in the Figure 4, seatwork is rarely used in honors classes, frequently used for brief periods of time in basic classes, and extensively used by the the four recitation teachers, especially in their regular classes. By investigating the apparent purpose of the seatwork segments it may become more clear why the school and ability groups trends exist. Three purposes could be discerned: to accommodate a specific activity (simulation game, to provide information for discussion), to create time when the teacher can interact with

individual students (to provide tutoring, give students individual feedback), or simply to provide worktime for students and the teacher (seatwork as a replacement for homework, the teacher needs time to prepare and grade). To a great degree, the teachers serving primarily college-bound students (Adams, Jefferson, and Truman) either did not use seatwork (7 classrooms) or only utilized seatwork to accommodate specific activities (3 classrooms). Only two of the classes within these schools, both basic level, frequently experienced seatwork for a variety of purposes. In contrast, all twelve of the classes in Carter, Hoover, and Grant High Schools completed some seatwork during the 9-10 days of observation.

Fig. 4 - The Percent of Time Spent in Seatwork in Relation to the Amount of Time Spent in Recitation



Honors= o Basic= x Regular= \ or /
Mr. Hurley, Mr. Hyde, Mr. Curtis, and Mr. Clark= /

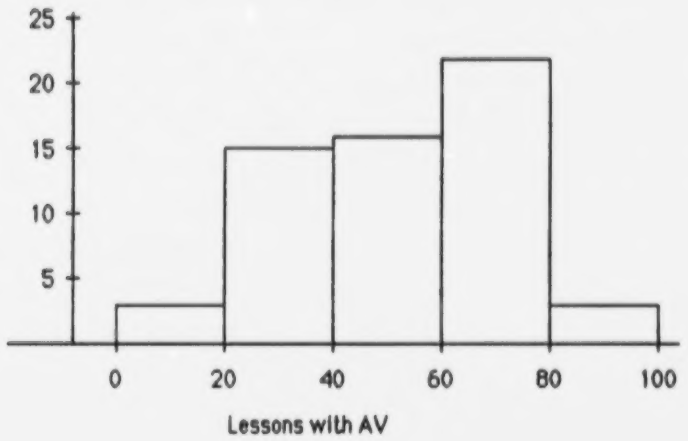
As can be seen from the Figure 4, seatwork is frequently used for brief periods in five of the six basic classes (the exception is Mr. Jewel at Jefferson), but is most heavily used in the regular classrooms at Hoover and Carter High Schools where recitation is also a common method. While most of the teachers in the schools serving a low proportion of college-bound students, as well as teachers of basic classes, used seatwork for various purposes, Mr. Gregory (regular and basic) and Mr. Thomas (basic- an outlier within the schools serving primarily college-bound students in this regard) appeared to use seatwork as a substitute for homework. Absolutely no homework was required in these classrooms; academic tasks and even testing situations were organized so that students could succeed based on a small to moderate amount of in-class effort.

The basic "building block" methods of oral instruction and seatwork formats can be combined to form more complex group work or inquiry type projects. As has been discovered in other teacher report or observational studies, such activities are quite

rare. In fact, only nine lessons involved some sort of group work and another nine involved simulation/role play activities. Even when considered as a group, less than 8% of the lessons involved an activity that differed from the norm of oral instruction, seatwork, AV, or testing. Once again, it is important to question the purpose, structure, and implementation of these activities in order to assess the opportunity to learn they presented. In all but two instances (Mr. Jewel) of the group or pair work, the potential of these lessons seemed to be compromised by either lack of purpose/lowering standards (e.g., students were simply allowed to complete worksheets together) or by a low-challenge task (e.g., Mr. Curtis effectively used a variant of cooperative learning, but the crossword puzzle tasks served merely as a review of basic facts). Of the four teachers who attempted some type of simulation, only one activity, presented by Mr. Clark to his basic class, seemed ineffective. The purpose of the activity was questionable (students were to identify the countries conquered by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in chronological order), plus poor planning and classroom management skills increased the amount of time necessary to conduct the activity. The more successful activities (Jewel, Anderson, Curtis) involved students in farm and stock market simulations in which students made crop or stock selections and experienced the ravages of the weather or the 1929 Crash. What is noteworthy concerning these activities is that they appeared very efficient; students learned a great deal from the experience, but the teacher remained in charge of the pacing and outcome of the activity. Perhaps this type of inquiry activity is seen as valuable by teachers because they can meet in-depth learning goals while not taking too much time away from tasks which more directly serve content goals.

The other teaching method used almost as frequently as seatwork, but consuming a great deal more instructional time is the use of audio-visual (AV) materials. Sample teachers used AV in 59 or 25.9% of lessons observed, with 19 of the classes seeing some AV over the 9-10 days of observation. As can by seen in Figure 5, in most of the lessons the AV (video, film, filmstrip, slide-music presentation) occupied 20-80% of the total instructional time.

Fig. 5- The Number of Lessons Utilizing AV Categorized by the Percent of Total Time Spent in the AV Format



Clearly AV is used extensively in many of these classrooms, and much like the lecture format, AV has great potential to not only assist the teacher in covering content, but also in exposing students to critical issues in American History. As with lecture, for AV to further student learning it seems imperative that teachers insure student engagement and help students to make critical linkages between the information presented by the AV and their prior learning. The AV segments were examined to assess whether the AV choice was appropriate and timed correctly, if the teacher introduced and concluded the AV presentation (should promote linkages), and if the teacher held students accountable for learning from the AV (should promote student engagement). First, only teachers in Carter, Hoover, and Grant encountered problems of AV choice and timing related to limited resources, while most of the schools serving primarily college-bound students had AV resources within the building. Second, while AV presentations in 8 classrooms appeared to offer great opportunity to learn, the use of AV in the other 11 classrooms was compromised by poor choice/timing, failure to keep students on-task, or failure to integrate the AV with prior learning. At the extreme, the outlier of the sample, Mr. Gregory, devoted at least two days per week to the viewing of filmstrips (and occasional films ordered by Mr. Gage), activities which simply filled class time instead of promoting learning. More typical was the way Mr. Thomas, a lecturer, handled AV. Film choices were appropriate, and Mr. Thomas introduced and concluded each presentation with a brief lecture introducing topics and summarizing main points. Nonetheless, the teacher failed to hold students accountable for their learning since they were not asked to take notes, complete a film guide (answer questions on the AV), consistently expected to pay attention during the AV, or

expected to discuss the AV, all techniques that were used successfully by about half of the teachers to promote student engagement.

Sample teachers, on average, spent anywhere between 63 and 85% of class time on instruction. Most of this time is spent in oral instruction, although some teachers spend a substantial amount of time in AV, and a smaller number of teachers devote a significant amount of time to seatwork activities. Relatively little time is spent in testing, with only 34, or 14.9% of the lessons involving a test or quiz. Remaining class time is spent in either instructional support or non-instructional pursuits, and differs dramatically over teachers. A more comprehensive view of teacher practice, and possible explanations for their choices can be obtained through a closer case study view of three selected teachers.

Possible Explanations for Teacher Practice

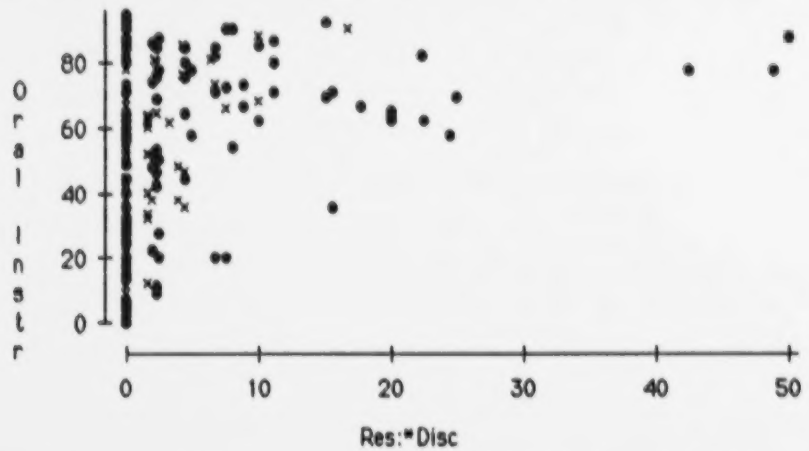
The four potential explanatory factors can be organized into those that appear strongly related to school features (teaching environment and the teacher's choice of goals) and those that are individual teacher characteristics (teacher content knowledge and teacher pedagogic knowledge/skills). Three teachers, one in each of the primary oral instructional method categories (Gage-lecture, Hurley-recitation, Jewel-response:discussion) were selected in order to illustrate the potential of the various factors to help us understand teacher practice. First the school-related explanatory factors will be examined, keeping in mind that Mr. Jewel teaches within a school serving primarily college-bound students (Jefferson) while Mr. Hurley (Hoover) and Mr. Gage (Grant) work with a less college-bound student body.

One of the most interesting findings of the study is that although most teachers mentioned some aspect of critical thinking during the interviews, only the six teachers at Adams, Jefferson, and Truman stated some variant of critical thinking skills as one of their key goals. (See Table 5 for a list of teacher goals.)

Insert Table 5 about here

Virtually all teachers in the sample felt a great deal of pressure to cover content; nonetheless, these teachers balanced content coverage with more in-depth oral instruction (response:discussion) and required students to complete many more challenging tasks such as writing assignments. As can be seen by Figure 6, all of the lessons that substantially utilize this more rigorous type of oral instruction occur in the schools serving a higher proportion of college-bound students.

Fig. 6- The Percent of Time Spent in Response:*Discussion by School



High -e Low- x Percent of Students College-Bound

If essentially all teachers have strong content coverage concerns, then how do many of the teachers at Adams, Jefferson, and Truman successfully make time in the curriculum for activities that foster student thinking skills? One key difference may be the expectations teachers hold for student completion of homework. Recall that seatwork is rarely used in these schools, while several of the teachers in Carter, Hoover, and Grant either do not require homework or allow students to complete many of these tasks as seatwork. For example, Mr. Jewel, in both his honors and basic classes, expects students to complete homework almost daily, and incorporates their knowledge gained from homework into oral instruction. Alternately, Mr. Gage and Mr. Hurley require homework less frequently, these tasks more often require simply recall or searching for information in the text, and neither teacher consistently expects students to use knowledge gained from homework in oral instruction. In many of the classrooms serving a lower proportion of college-bound students, the press for content coverage takes the form of limited expectations for student homework and concomitant coverage of the content through teacher lecture, seatwork, AV, and structured recitation.

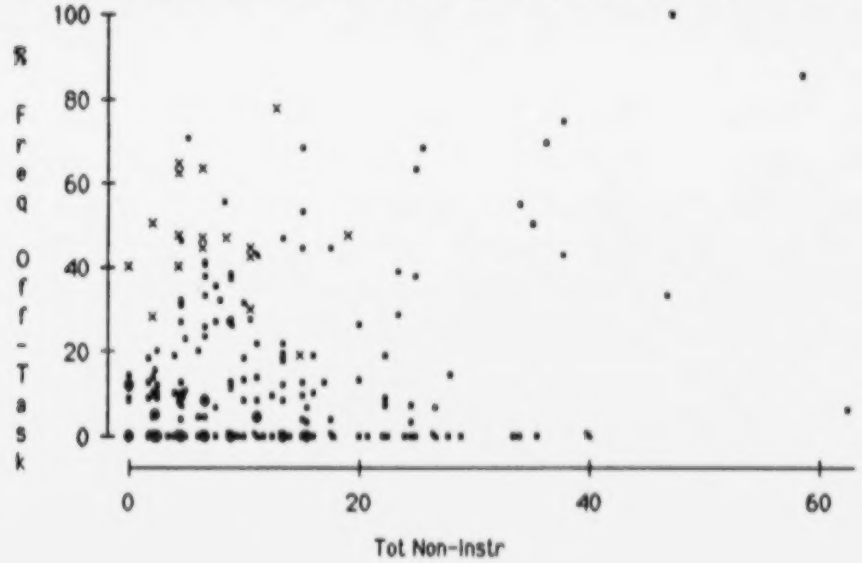
Multiple aspects of the teaching environment can combine to make the setting either positive, neutral, or unfavorable toward successful teaching. In general, it appears that schools serving professional communities provide a more positive teaching environment. For instance, Mr. Jewel mentioned strong student support programs, numerous professional development activities, and the assistance of highly knowledgeable colleagues as reasons for his success with both basic and honors students. In contrast, the three remaining schools offer fewer materials (AV and books), less effective departmental leadership (chairs from a discipline other than

social studies or no chair in the building), and less content expertise among colleagues. Adams, Jefferson, and Truman seem to hire content experts (all teachers have at least a major in history and substantive graduate work in the field) and give the teachers the necessary resources and incentives to engage in high quality curriculum development and planning. The teaching environments of the other schools do not seem to produce the same norm for teacher generation of plans and activities; instead, most of these teachers made use of publisher materials such as worksheets, vocabulary lists, and tests. Perhaps the fact that these teachers possessed less content knowledge (only one teacher with substantial graduate work, one with a major, and four teachers possessing less than a minor in history) explains the tendency to stay closer to the text, stress the content coverage goal, and utilize less response:discussion.

Characteristics of the students and community must also be mentioned as potent aspects of the teaching environment. The fact that the majority of students at Jefferson, Adams, and Truman plan to attend college certainly influences teacher selection of the critical thinking goal, and some of their teaching methods. Of course, teaching at the other schools, especially Grant and Carter, is quite different considering that a high number of students are at-risk for dropping out of school. Certainly, the fact that many of these environmental factors are interrelated compounds the situation for the these teachers.

By assessing key aspects of instruction for the three case study teachers, it will be possible to explore whether differences in content knowledge and pedagogic knowledge/skills, the teaching environment, or teacher goals explain observed variation in opportunity to learn. In order to learn, students must first be exposed to, and engaged in, instruction. Two variables related to student engagement, and a teacher's pedagogic knowledge and skills, can be examined on the next page in Figure 6. Only Mr. Hurley's regular class, and occasionally Mr. Gage's classes, expend a substantial amount of time in non-instructional pursuits; however, for the most part, students are exposed to instruction for the bulk of class time. Nonetheless, in Mr. Gage's classes, an extremely high portion of the students are frequently off-task during most lessons in both his honors and basic classes. Clearly, Mr. Gage lacks key pedagogic skills related to classroom management. Mr. Hurley's "high production" recitation/lecture/seatwork style keeps students on-task, and students are nearly always engaged in the diverse activities offered by Mr. Jewel.

Fig. 6- The Percent of Students Frequently Off-Task in Relation to the Percent of Time Spent in Non-Instructional Pursuits

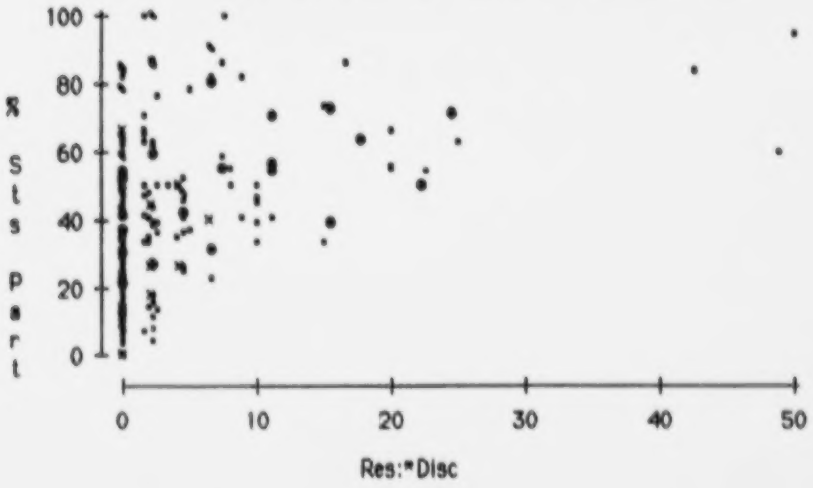


Mr. Jewel- • Mr. Hurley- \ Mr. Gage- x

Although it was not possible in the study to obtain an objective measure of pedagogic knowledge, it was at least possible to measure the amount of history coursework completed by the teachers as a proxy for content knowledge. Both Mr. Jewel and Mr. Gage completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in history, while Mr. Hurley had studied economics and social science in college, and possesses less than a minor in history. Mr. Hurley's limited content knowledge offers a partial explanation for his reliance on recitation and factually-oriented lecture, while the two content experts, Mr. Jewel and Mr. Gage, utilized response:discussion or lecture in a way that themes and the conceptual structure of their history knowledge became apparent. While the information presented by the experts may have been better organized and in more depth, student opportunity to learn history may be lessened by poor pedagogic knowledge/skills, as in the case of Mr. Gage. But what of Mr. Hurley, who appears to have weak content knowledge, yet manages to keep students engaged in instruction?

Returning again to the question of involvement in rigorous oral instruction, examination of Figure 7 can be instructive.

Fig. 7- The Percent of Students Participating Orally in Relation to the Percent of Time Spent in Response:*Discussion



Mr. Jewel=● Mr. Hurley=\ Mr. Gage=x

Only Mr. Jewel at Jefferson offers the students continual opportunity to be involved in rigorous response:discussion. Mr. Gage's tendency to lecture results in extremely limited opportunity for student oral participation, but Mr. Hurley's recitation style (especially in his regular class) results in extremely high levels of student participation. The recitation, and concomitant high level of oral participation, explains the low incidence of off-task behavior; students in Mr. Hurley's classes are engaged, but the level of academic demands is extremely low and oriented around the facts (or trivia) of history. Alternately, while Mr. Gage's strong content knowledge allows him to craft substantive lectures oriented around moral questions and dilemmas faced by American leaders, his poor pedagogical decisions and lack of management skills constrains student opportunity to learn from his instruction. In contrast, Mr. Jewel possesses both strong content and pedagogic knowledge/skills, and works within a positive teaching environment that supports his goals of content coverage and critical thinking skills. Integration of homework tasks, response:discussion, recitation, AV, and limited lecture insured that Mr. Jewel maintained a high level of student oral participation and corresponding low levels of non-instructional time and off-task behavior. In addition, Mr. Jewel is one of the few teachers in the sample who insured student learning from in-class and homework tasks by elaborating on how and why tasks should be completed, as well as providing students with continual feedback on their progress.

Implications

The instructional styles of these high School United States History teachers, and the opportunity to learn they offer students, differ even though all utilize the basic instructional methods of lecture, recitation, seatwork, and AV. Although the study's small sample size, as well as the focus on one social studies subject, suggest the use of caution in generalizing and making policy recommendations, the range of teaching situations resulting from the design affords credence to the questions raised and policy implications generated by the study. For example, limited use of response:discussion, inquiry/group projects, and failure to integrate AV point to underutilized methods for promoting student learning of critical social studies skills. In addition, while all teachers feel pressure to cover content, certain teaching environments seem to promote teacher thoughtfulness in balancing content and skill goals. Perhaps community support of critical skills, and the active instructional leadership of social studies chairs, characteristics of the three college preparatory schools, need to be propagated in all settings.

The study also raises questions concerning the adequacy of teacher education in the areas of content and pedagogic knowledge. For instance, the fact that content expertise is not equally distributed across schools would seem to increase inequities in student opportunity to learn. Expertise in content and pedagogic knowledge are not necessarily related, although the three response:discussion teachers were highly skilled in both realms. Nonetheless, the fact that the five teachers who had the most difficulty keeping students engaged in instruction spanned schools and ability groups, as well as both the lecture and recitation teaching styles, and possess various levels of content expertise, calls attention to a problem that may be limiting student opportunity to learn in numerous classrooms. Increasing student opportunity to learn, especially the opportunity to learn critical thinking skills, may well involve changing some teaching environments, and insuring that all teachers have the requisite content and pedagogic knowledge/skills to choose and implement the goals and activities that will bring us closer to the ideal social studies classroom envisioned by reformers.

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Tables

Table 1

Selected School Characteristics*

School	*Adams	*Jefferson	*Truman	Hoover	Carter	Grant
School Enrollment	1798	3021	1655	1435	1472	913
Cost Per Pupil	$8,021	$7,826	$7,964	$3,232	$6,760	$6,405
% Students Low-Income	0.4	22.1	4.4	11.2	25.3	37.2
% Students White	88.0	51.5	83.2	83.4	36.9	24.8
% Students Black	0.1	41.8	1.8	1.3	43.4	63.2
% Students Hispanic	1.1	3.6	8.8	13.2	18.8	8.9
% Students Asian	10.8	3.1	5.8	1.1	0.4	2.4
Mobility Rate	2.8	6.4	16.9	18.3	24.9	28.5
Attendance Rate	93.4	93.7	92.7	91.9	89.4	82.8
Graduation Rate	98.0	91.2	90.9	87.2	67.1	62.9
Average ACT Score	21.6	19.9	19.3	18.8	16.3	13.4
% Students Taking ACT	97.4	77.6	72.1	35.7	25.1	56.7

*Data from 1988-1989 School District Reports to the State

All schools are located in suburban comunities of a major Midwestern metropolitan area, with the exception of Hoover, which is located in a small town.

* Schools serving a high proportion of college-bound students

Table 2

Selected Teacher Characteristics

School/ Teacher	Years Exp	# Preps	Content Background BA	Content Background MA	History Equivalent > Major w/Grad	History Equivalent Major w/Grad	History Equivalent Major BA	History Equivalent Minor BA	# Sports Coached
Adams H.S.									
Mr. Anderson	16	4	Int. Relations	Hist + JD	x				
Mr. Armstrong	22	3	Hist; Geog	Hist	x				
Jefferson H.S.									
Mr. Jewel	12	3	Hist(US)	Hist; few ed.	x				
Mr. Jones	26	3	English	Eng; Hist		x			
Truman H.S.									
Mr. Taney	4	2	Pol Sci; Hist	Hist	x				1
Mr. Thomas	9	2	Gen SS; Health	Ed; Hist		x			3
Hoover H.S.									
Mr. Hurley	9	4	Econ; Gen SS	Ed; few SS				x	2
Mr. Hyde	12	2	Hist; Eng	Ed-Spec.(BD)			x		1
Carter H.S.									
Mr. Clark	20	2	Gen SS; English	No MA: Ed; Eng				x	
Mr. Curtis	12	3	Pol Sci	Ed; Adm				x	2
Grant H.S.									
Mr. Gage	25	3	Hist	Hist	x				retired
Mr. Gregory	26	3	Gen SS	Ed Adm				x	retired
Totals					5	2	1	4	

Table 3

Abbreviations and Definitions of the Study Variables

Coding Categories: Time Use*

Instructional Formats

1) Lec	Lecture- A teacher oral presentation to students in which student questions may be allowed, but teacher questions to students are extremely limited. Any teacher questions are typically answered by the teacher.
2) Rec	Lecture/recitation- A teacher presentation including frequent questions to students. Questions are convergent in nature, necessitate only a brief answer (a word or a phrase), and since the teacher often expects the majority of students to be able to answer the questions, students may answer in chorus.
3) Respon	Lecture/response- A teacher-led segment in which questions to students may be either convergent or divergent, but necessitate a more lengthy response (a phrase or a sentence).
4) Disc	Lecture/discussion- A teacher-led discussion in which the segment is oriented around teacher questions which require a relatively long student response (long phrase or sentence). Questions are more open-ended and there may be evidence of student-student interaction.
5) *Disc	Discussion- The teacher orchestrates student discussion by asking open questions and expecting the students to carry the bulk of the discourse. The teacher is much less directive and prompts a great deal of student-student interaction.
6) Stwk	Seatwork- Students work on a reading, worksheet, or writing task in class, usually at their own pace. Occasionally students may complete seatwork tasks in small groups.
7) Testing	Testing- Any quiz or exam that is a formal assessment of student learning. The task is graded, usually by the teacher at a later time; however, in a few settings students grade each other's work.
8) AV	Audio-Visual- The primary instructional function is carried out by a technological device such as a VCR, film, or filmstrip projector. AV is still coded if the teacher makes a comment of less than one minute during the AV segment.

Instructional Support

9) T-Info	Task Information- The teacher gives directions or instructions (oral or written) concerning a task (homework or in-class). Directions focus on the technical aspects of the assignment, such as the chapter to be read, questions to answer, due date, time frame, point value, or general grading procedure.

* Fieldnotes from observations were coded in one minute segments according to the following categories. These variables are typically expressed as a percent of total time.

10) T-Elab — Task Elaboration- The teacher elaborates on a task assignment by linking it to content previously discussed, engaging students in brief guided practice related to the task, or clearly linking the task to broader goals.

11) Fdbk — Feedback to Students- Oral or written feedback to students concerning performance on in-class, homework, or testing tasks. Feedback may be given to the entire class, or to individual students on a consistent basis. Also included would be information which seeks to improve future performance, such as clarifying evaluative criteria for a task or motivational speeches in regard to student academic performance.

Non-Instructional Formats

12) Grading — Grading- Students and the teacher engage in the technical task of grading a task or a quiz. Includes grading each item, as well as computing and reporting the score.

13) Chores — Organizational Chores- Includes various organizational and administrative tasks such as taking attendance, changing the seating arrangement, or collecting/distributing materials. The attention of the teacher and students is totally directed toward completion of the chore.

14) Beh Mngt — Behavior Management- Time spent managing the behavior of the entire class or individual students. Also included are general lectures concerning behavior, as well as preventative motivational lectures concerning student behavior or attendance.

16) Social — Organized Social- Occurs when the teacher engages the entire class concerning non-academic matters. If the topic commented on by the teacher can be construed to be a current event, and therefore a social studies related issue, the appropriate instructional format is coded.

17) No Task — No Task- Occurs typically when the teacher is occupied and has failed to give the students a task. Frequently occurs at the beginning of class, but may occur at any time.

18) Free Time — Free Time- The teacher deliberately gives students free time to do as they wish. Usually occurs at the end of the period.

19) Interruptions — Interruptions- Class time devoted to typically administrative matters which are not under the control of the teacher. Often consists of public address announcements.

Variables Calculated from Time Coding, Class Characteristics, and Student Behavior

Total Time Use

20) Tot Instr — Total Instructional Time- Represents the sum of time spent in all instructional formats (variables 1-8) expressed as the percent of total time.

21) Tot I-Support — Total Instructional Support- Represents the sum of time spent in all instructional support formats (variables 9-11), expressed as the percent of total time.

22) Tot Non-Instr Total Non-Instructional Time- Represents the sum of the time spent in non-instructional formats (variables 12-19), expressed as the percent of total time.

Oral Instructional Time Use

23) Oral Instr Total Oral Instruction- The sum of all instruction carried out orally (variables 1-5), expressed as the percent of total time.

24) % O-Lec Percent of Oral Time which is Lecture- The time spent in lecture shown as a percent of total oral instructional time.

25) % O-Rec Percent of Oral Time which is Recitation- The time spent in Lecture/recitation shown as a percent of total oral instructional time.

26) % O-Respon:*Disc Percent of Oral Time which is Response/Discussion- The time spent in Lecture/response, Lecture/ discussion, or Discussion, shown as a percent of total oral instructional time.

27) % O-St Involv Percent of Oral Time with Student Involvement- The time spent in Lecture/recitation, Lecture/response, Lecture/discussion, or Discussion, shown as a percent of total oral instructional time.

Student Oral Involvement

28) * Non-Vol Number Non-Volunteers- A count of the number of times during a class period that the teacher called on a student non-volunteer for an answer.

29) % O-?s Percent of Student Utterances that are Questions- The number of student utterances within a class period that are questions, shown as a percent of total utterances (comments (usually answers to teacher questions) and questions).

30) % Sts Part Percent of Students who Participated Orally- The percent of students who participated at least once orally (comment or question) during a class period.

Student Off-Task Behavior

31) % Off-Task Percent of Students Off-Task- The percent of students observed to be off-task (socializing, sleeping, engaged in other pursuits besides the assigned task) at least once during a class period.

32) % Freq Off-Task Percent of Students Frequently Off-Task- The percent of students observed to be off-task three or more times during a class period.

Table 4

Teachers Listed by Primary Teaching Method, School, and Ability Level of Classes Taught

Primary Teaching Method

Teacher	School	Class: Honors	Regular	Basic
Lecture				
Mr Armstrong	*Adams H S		x	x
Mr Jones	*Jefferson H S	x	x	
Mr Thomas	*Truman H S		x	x
Mr Gage	Grant H S	x		x
Recitation				
Mr Hurley	Hoover H S	x	x	
Mr Hyde	Hoover H S		xx	
Mr Clark	Carter H S		x	x
Mr Curtis	Carter H S		xx	
Response:Discussion				
Mr Anderson	*Adams H S	x	x	
Mr Jewel	*Jefferson H S	x		x
Mr Taney	*Truman H S		xx	
AV: Seatwork: Free Time				
Mr Gregory	Grant H S		x	x
		5	13	6

*Schools serving a high proportion of college-bound students

Table 5

Goals Stated by Teachers

School/Teacher	1-Content	2-Cultural Literacy	3-Citizenship Education	4-Critical Soc. Stud. Skills	5-General Skills	6-Responsibility
Adams H.S.						
Mr. Anderson	x	x	x	x	x	
Mr. Armstrong	x	x	x	x	(Basic Sts)	
Jefferson H.S.						
Mr. Jewel	x			x	(Love Learning)	x
Mr. Jones				(Research Skills)	(How to learn)	
Truman H.S.						
Mr. Taney	x	x		x	x	
Mr. Thomas	x			x	x	
Hoover H.S.						
Mr. Hurley	x	x	x			
Mr. Hyde		x				
Carter H.S.						
Mr. Clark	x	x	x			
Mr. Curtis	x	x				x
Grant H.S.						
Mr. Gage	x	x				
Mr. Gregory	x					
Totals	10	8	4	6	6	2

1-Content: Any goal mentioning the content of US History.
2-Cultural Literacy: Goals concerning cultural information; learning from history and our past mistakes.
3-Citizenship Education: Goals concerning educating students to uphold democratic responsibilities.
4-Critical Social Studies Skills: Critical thinking skills such as understanding another point of view.
5-General Skills: Primarily reading and writing skills.
6-Responsibility: Developing responsibility or self-discipline in students.